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## Maleiwa: A Story of Creation

**Juan J. Garces**  
*University of North Georgia*

**M**y art often reflects my native roots and history. Inspired by the native pre-Colombian cultures, I try to express the influence they still have on the modern Colombian culture. Even though I wasn't born into indigenous tribal culture, their history, folkways and art have a profound influence on my work. In Colombia, there are over 87 indigenous ethnic groups and over 64 native languages that belong to 22 linguistic families. However, many aspects of the indigenous group's culture were lost during the Spanish Conquest and Inquisition. My mission is to show all of the beauty and cultural information that my country has to offer through my artwork.

"Maleiwa" is the Wayuu word for creation, and the word for God. The Wayuu's are an indigenous group that lives in the Gujara desert in the northeast region of the Colombian territory. This group is one of the few that have survived into the present day and is one of the few groups that one can still interact with. My painting "Maleiwa" tries to recreate their creation legend. This indigenous group is very peculiar. They have many beliefs in common with Western Christianity, specifically the creation story found in the book of Genesis. They believe in one God, which is the creator of everything, and that beginning, there was nothing but God. His process of creation was not smooth or simple. The universe was first compressed and then exploded, also strikingly similar to our modern "Big Bang" theory.

The piece uses primary colors to illustrate the beginning of everything. These colors are a metaphor for creation. The blues represent the water; the living energy that allow us to life. Red represents fire and the creation of life. The brown the earth that provide us with everything humans need. The spiral motif represents air: the last element in the recipe for the creation of the humans. I chose to make the painting abstract creating an intentional movement throughout the painting that expresses a feeling of chaos.

In short, this work is a symbol of my roots, the indigenous culture from which they spring, and an exploration of contemporary artistic styles and technique that tell an ancient story of creation, beginnings and elemental power. It is my hope that the viewer can sense the raw power of this beautiful narrative called "Maleiwa."

**JUAN JAIRO GARCES** is an International Art Marketing Student at the University of North Georgia. He was born on November 27, 1993 in Barranquilla, Colombia. Maleiwa, the piece presented here and on the cover of this journal, was featured in the 2016 Hal B. Rhodes III Juried Student Exhibition.

Oil & Plasticine on canvas  
18" x 30"

